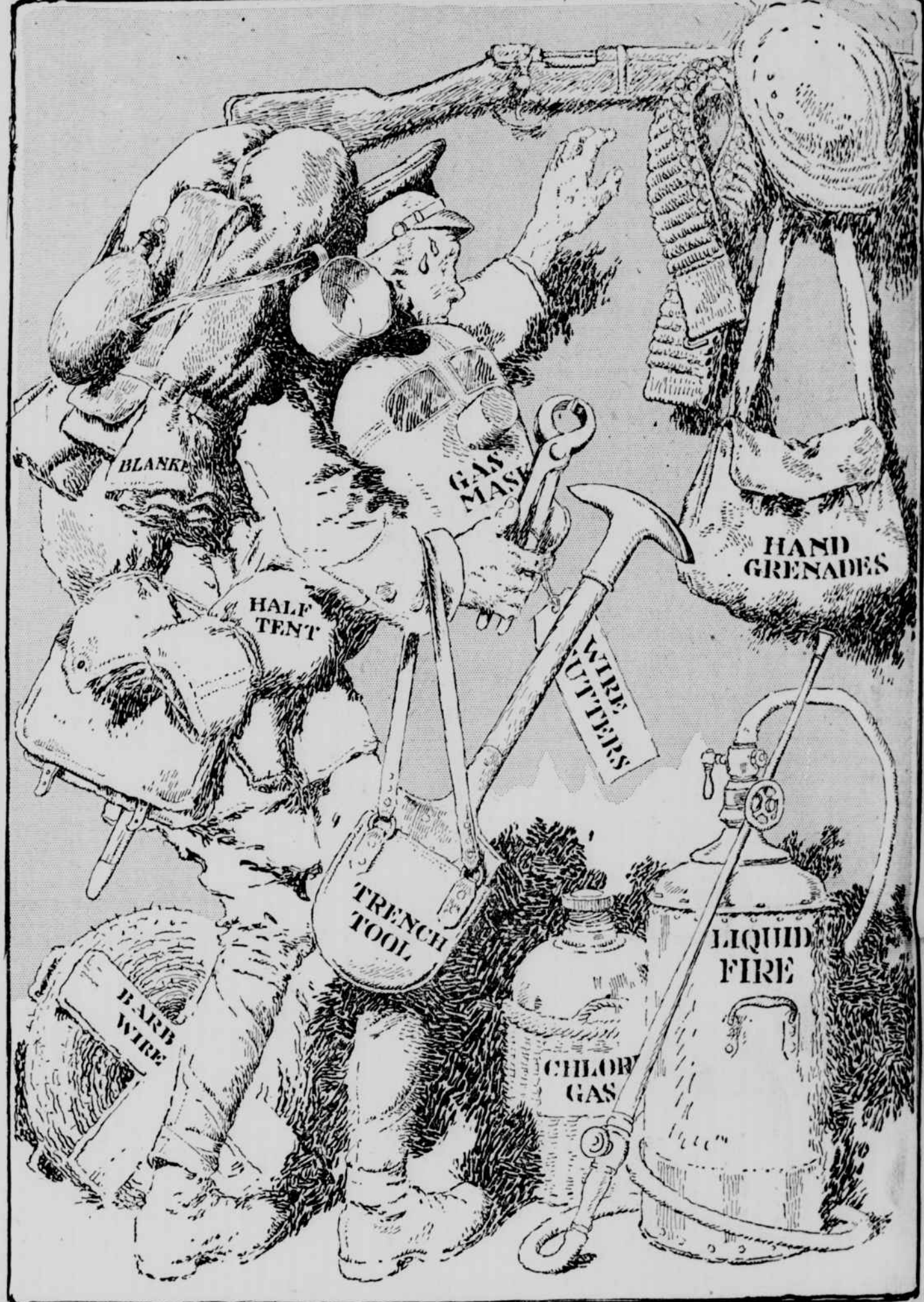


IT WAS EASY TO BE A MINUTE MAN WITH THE EQUIPMENT OF 1776.



Drawn by Will Crawford.

BUT THE WAR-GAME IS A TRIFLE MORE COMPLICATED IN 1916.

THE SHABBY, elderly gentleman in the wrinkled frockcoat threw his newspaper violently upon the barroom floor and glared upon me with his flaming red eyes.

"We are absolutely at the mercy of Great Britain," he bellowed. "Absolutely!"

"You don't mean"—I began.

"I mean that our defenses are almost wholly derisory, and I can see no prospect of real preparedness."

I resigned myself to the inevitable winter league war argument. "Surely Britain will never invade us," I said.

"We are already invaded," he cried. "They are upon us in overwhelming strength of armament. Not only have we not a single super-dreadnought, but I doubt if, since O. Henry is dead, we have anything that can be classed as a plain dreadnought without the super."

"What," I asked, "has O. Henry to do with preparedness?"

"I am speaking of literary preparedness," said the shabby one. He stamped testily upon the newspaper. "Columns and columns about our military unpreparedness, our naval unpreparedness, our economic, commercial and social unpreparedness, but not one paragraph about our shameful and disgusting literary unpreparedness."

"I never thought of that," I said.

"Neither has Congress nor the newspapers," he grumbled. "Here is Britain with at least seven modern literary super-dreadnoughts, the Wells, Conrad, Galsworthy, Shaw, James Stephens, Chesterton and Bennett; a great number of dreadnoughts, including those of an old type but still very powerful, like the Kipling, the Barrie and the de Morgan, and more recent ones like the May Sinclair, the Lawrence, etc., and hundreds of effective lesser craft. Now where do we stand? What in comparison is the strength of our literary fleet?"

Beneath his fierce scowl I said nothing.

"Oh, I can name a lot of our first line ships," he said. "The Jack London, Tarkington, How-

## SWEEPINGS FROM INKPOT ALLEY

BY TANSY M'NAB

ells, Wharton, Churchill, Atherton, Harrison, the twin cruisers Merwin and Webster, and many others, all very well in their way, but not to be compared in range and power with the larger units of the British fleet. Then we have many vessels of the Chambers-Owen Johnson type, which are really only armed merchantmen, designed for commercial purposes rather than actual literary warfare. We possess a whole fleet of popgun boats, sailing in the shallow, landlocked waters of the popular magazines. Supplementing these are the mid-Victorian sailing frigates, like the James Lane Allen, the armament of which is wholly inoffensive. Then there are, of course, our scout or detective cruisers, patterned after the incomparable British Holmes, that unravel thirty knots an hour, but possess an almost negligible literary armament. These must not be confused with the boy scout cruisers, such as the Owen Wister and the Ernest Thompson Seton. The rest is silence.

"You have forgotten the battleship Dreiser," I suggested.

"With a lass in every port," he growled. "No, I have not forgotten it, but I could forgive it if it did not always sail over the same course."

"And there are the Irv Cobb, the Ade and the Mr. Dooley."

"Humorists," said the shabby one, "are literary submarines. As such their status is always questionable. They torpedo you in the ribs, and if they hit you explode with laughter. The marksmanship of many of our submarines is fair, but I should say on the whole they had a rather narrow cruising radius."

"Then there are our essayists and critics," I went on, "the New Republic group, the Atlantic group, and so forth. We really have some good criticism."

"A critic comes naturally in the destroyer class," he said. "I think this portion of our literary fleet would be more effective if it were not overweighted with its armament of Harvardized steel. But super-dreadnoughts are our bitter need. And nobody is doing anything to get them. Billions for battleships is the cry, but not one cent for literary dreadnoughts."

"But we can't go to the Cramps and ask them to build us a dozen literary dreadnoughts of, let us say, the Shavian type," I protested. "Unfortunately, such things are born, not made. We can't buy them."

"Why not?" he asked sharply. "We have a splendid chance to get by purchase incomparably the strongest literary navy in the world."

I stared at him.

"It's as simple as buying a pound of cheese," he added. "We have loaned the Allies half a billion dollars, haven't we? And they certainly need the money more than we do. So why not wipe out the debt on consideration that they turn over to us the French super-dreadnought Anatole France and the British super-dreadnoughts Wells, Conrad, Galsworthy, Shaw, Stephens, Chesterton and Bennett, and as many more units of their literary fleet as we can bargain for? We might let the Interborough lawyers conduct the negotiations for us, to make sure we get the best of the deal."

"Wonderful!" I watsoned.

"Mere common sense," he snorted.

"But shouldn't we secure some of the Russians, too?" I suggested.

"Humph!" he said. "One can always read Zola in the original."

"It's a great scheme," I conceded, after an interval, "but"—

"But the government won't by any chance take it up," he grunted. "Our Congressmen, of course, never read anything except the newspapers, and apparently the President is interested in letters only in a literal and epistolary sense."

ON CRITICS WHO LOOK OVER THE WATER.

There are many superior persons, like the grouch quoted above, who take a pessimistic attitude toward American writers. They also decry American politics and American railroads and American cities and American scenery and American children and American pies. Similarly, in Washington's time, there were many superior persons who decry the idea of an American government. But these persons were not held in high regard. The grouch, we have always with us, and likewise the dyspeptic and the sorehead and those wistful sentimentalists to whom, as Rube Goldberg says, "they all look good when they're far away."

After all, we must remember that the most popular novelists in England are Florence Barclay, Marie Corelli and Hall Caine. England's cleverest dramatist is an Irishman named Shaw. Her cleverest biographer and short story writer is an American named Harris. She has two fiction writers of unique beauty and charm—there is nothing like them in any other literature—and one is a Pole named Conrad, while the other is an Irishman named Stephens. Incidentally, her most comprehensive historian of George Moore is an Irishman named Moore. Much of the best English literary output is hyphenated.

Meanwhile, we are coming on, strictly under our own steam. In the last few years many new American fiction writers of splendid interpretative powers have come forward, such as Ernest Poole, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Stephen Whitman, Henry Sydnor Harrison and James Oppenheim. Periodicals of distinction and power, like "The New Republic" and that irrepressible "The Masses," have appeared, and command an increasing public. "The Masses" would be suppressed immediately in England. Here we suppress it only in the subway, which is by way of being a compliment.

George Moore has said that the future of the English language lies in America. It is a prophecy worth pondering by our Tory pessimists. Certainly it will never be fulfilled unless we believe it ourselves. We may not have any literary super-dreadnoughts sailing the inky seas, but undoubtedly there are some on the ways.

IS MR. HARRISON THROUGH?

Speaking of American novelists, I hear that Henry Sydnor Harrison has been telling his friends he will probably write no more fiction. He has not produced a line since he penned *Angela's Business*, some two years ago, and went off to join the American Ambulance Corps with the French army. He has now been back for a year, but his publishers have had no encouraging word from him.

While abroad he saw something of the first battle of Loos (how long ago that seems!), he was in Dunkirk when the Germans first shelled that place with long-range guns, and once a bomb dropped by a German air scout missed him by a few yards. Experiences crowded upon him during his months at the front, but he has been unable to make copy out of the war. He takes it too seriously for that. He

did not go over to look for material, but solely to do his bit for the wounded in France.

When Mr. Harrison was graduated from Columbia, in 1900, he became a teacher in the Brooklyn Latin School, which was run by his father. On his father's death he became principal. After he had become as good a schoolmaster as he had it in him to be, he quit and went to Richmond, Va., where he became the F. P. A. of "The Times-Dispatch." Eventually he succeeded to the editorship of the paper. But after he decided he had learned all he could about newspaper editing he resigned, to try his hand at novel writing, and in four months he had ready the manuscript of "Queed." At this time he remarked: "After I have written a few novels and am as good as I can be at that I will probably take up something else."

If Mr. Harrison quits fiction he will be consistent, at any rate. "Angela's Business" marks a big advance in construction and technique over "Queed," though "Queed" will remain the trademark of Mr. Harrison.

It is to be hoped Mr. Harrison will change his intention and give us some more good books. We cannot easily spare him. But if he does go in for some activity other than novel writing, we can be sure whatever he does will be interesting, and it will be well done.

THE REVIEWER'S ONE BEST BET.

In his book "Libraries" John Cotton Dana of the Newark Free Public Library, tells us that librarians read book reviews for their guidance, but suggests that nobody else does. Mr. Dana has forgotten the authors. There are authors who never get over the astounding fact that their work is of sufficient importance to be reviewed, and authors who can never understand how a mere reviewer can have the effrontery to express an opinion on their work. In both classes the daily envelope from the clipping bureau is devoured with great appetite.